E-Governance in Davao Region: An Assessment of City Government Websites

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Abstract: The study evaluated the resources and services available in the official government website of all the cities in Davao Region to determine the extent of its implementation of e-governance. In particular, the assessment was done to verify if the queried contents were promoted in their websites. Moreover, the compliance of the city websites in posting the reports required by the Full Disclosure Policy (FDP) was also determined.

Findings showed that relatively low results were acquired by the city websites in Davao Region except for Davao and Tagum where most of the contents were promoted in the site. Moreover, the websites of both cities have advanced features and services which were not included in the checklist. To add with, information cited are not that rich and limited only and most of the contents are displayed through text in static mode. As to the FDP compliance, findings revealed that except for Digos, all cities utilized their website to post the reports required under the FDP.

The study concludes that while all cities have utilized their websites for e-governance, the quality of its contents show substandard adoption and underutilization. The study suggests that each city exploit the benefits offered by the websites as a medium in promoting innovative public service delivery.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.3.5 [Online Information Services]: Web-based services
H.3.7 [Digital Libraries]: Collection, Dissemination, Standards, Systems issues, User issues

General Terms: Management, Measurement, Documentation, and Standardization

Keywords: Citizen's Participation, e-Governance, Transparency, Government Websites, Good Governance, Full Disclosure Policy, Accountability.

1. Introduction

The constant tremendous development in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in this modern era continues to influence the manner of how government should look into improving efficient and effective public service and promotion of transparency in order to boost responsiveness; this is the so-called e-government.

In fact, the once unreachable government's vital information such as budgets and spending are now made accessible to the general public through website as a medium.

At present, the rampant utilization of government websites to publish tremendous amount of information is observable. As a matter of fact, most countries are going beyond basic websites through providing national portals for the citizens to be connected to government services (UN e-Government Survey, 2010)1. Even the local governments around the world have their own website and regularly enhance its contents in order to develop better engagement with the citizens. This follows Darlington and Pitts (2012)2 who said

that local government websites have to shift from a simple and ease of use website management to a more engaging, personalized and sophisticated one such as providing a relevant roadblock, or a message that appears over the web page which has to be dismissed or followed.

In the Philippines, several provincial, city, municipal and some barangay (village) local government units (LGUs) have their own website. A study which analyzes the 102 websites of all the City Governments in the country accessed in 2004 was conducted by Siar (2007)3. This study aims to fill in and update some previous related studies through comprehensively investigating the content and information contained in each city government website in order to determine the scope, usefulness, degree of transparency and effectiveness in improving the governance process.

It has been 6 years since the study was published by Siar (2007) and almost a decade has passed since the websites that were included in the study were accessed last 2004. Various developments in information and communication technology (ICT), in particular to the transformation of e-governance in the country, have been noticeable. The very recent is the implementation of the Full Disclosure Policy (FDP) which was started last 2010 as spearheaded by the late DILG Secretary, Jesse Robredo.

Through FDP, Local Government Units (LGUs) have been encouraged to practice the culture of transparency and accountability in public service by means of fully disclosing to the general public the required reports and documents through posting in at least three conspicuous places including the official government website of the local government unit.

Thus, there is a need to update the current status of e-governance focusing on assessing the contents of the government websites of all the cities in Davao Region. In addition, the implementation of the FDP policy particularly the prerequisite of posting the required reports and documents at the government websites makes it imperative to know the extent of compliance of the concerned city LGUs to this requirement. Hence, this study.

2. Statement of the Problem

Generally, the study was conducted to know what resources and services are made available in the official government websites of all the cities in Davao Region. Specifically, the study sought to address the following questions:

1. What is the current status of the cities' websites in terms of promotion of the following information:
    a. Citizen awareness and understanding of their community's characteristics;
    b. Efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery;
    c. Transparency and accountability in operations and services;
    d. Awareness of policy making process and participation in decision making;
    e. Linkage and interaction between government and citizens and other groups; and
    f. Linkage between government and business?
2. What is the extent of compliance of the city governments in posting the following reports and documents at their government websites:
    a. Budget Reports;
    b. Procurement Reports; and
    c. Special Purpose Fund Reports?
3. How do these city websites compare in terms of:
    a. Contents of information; and
    b. Posting of the FDP required reports?

3. Objectives

This study aimed to provide a perspective as to what extent the local government of the cities in Davao Region implemented e-governance. Specifically, the study looked into the content of the websites and examined the services and resources of each city. Moreover, the research determined the compliance of the city government in implementing FDP in the manner of posting the required documents at their official government website.

Finally, the study tried to come up with an analysis as to the current status of the concerned cities in implementing e-governance along with a comparison of the contents of information and the posting of the contents of information and the posting of the FDP required reports. The translated assessment that was examined aimed to provide feedback that will be useful in the improvement of e-governance in the cities of Davao Region.

4. E-Governance

e-Governance was defined by Kasubiene (2007) and further cited in the work of Farhan and Sanderson (2009) as *"the process and structures pertinent to electronic delivering of government services to the public"*.4 It is widely elaborated by Lallana, Pascual, Soriano (2002)5 as relevant to governance processes as the use of ICT by the government agencies for the ability of transforming relations with citizens, businesses, government employees and other arms of government in the delivery of services.

4.1 Website as a tool of e-Governance

Website was defined by Parajuli (2007)6 as a virtual location used by any of the organization having a unique uniform resource locator catering the need of all the intended users by providing information through multimedia components. In the article of Christopher Steins (2002)7 he reported that among the top 10 technologies being implemented as part of an e-Government, website ranks first. As years passed with its accompanying constant development of technology, Kalra and Verma (2005)8, explained that with government websites, forms and transaction became widely accessible in the sense that even tracking one's application are being made possible in the easiest manner. In respect to that, they regarded the websites as an effective medium for e-Governance and recognized its effectiveness as a powerful medium which became a reason why the types of governance became familiar with the common citizens. As added by Parajuli (2007), the use of websites in government service reinforces the governments' commitment to thrive electronically and add new dimensions to the ways of the government in delivering physical delivery of its services.

4.2 Social Networking in e-Government Websites

In the Philippines, social sites such as Facebook and Twitter are widely used by the government agencies to reach millions of citizens for communication purposes. Such scenarios are likewise visible in the countries of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) by means of using Facebook where once or still a county battling for democracy. Citizen-Government interaction is now everybody's concern, in fact, the Public-Private Partnership collaborated in the countries of MENA as accorded by USTDA (2007) prioritizes the linking interaction of national and local levels of e-Government operations (Demissie, et al., 2010).[9]

In the report from UN e-Government Survey (2010), most developing countries around the world are still limited in the transactional aspect of e-Government and none of the countries listed were able to obtain over 50 percent of the 403 points available in the transaction stage. The development ranking of Philippines in the world e-Government is 78 during that time. Moreover, it is noteworthy to include that in the above survey stated, the e-Government program of the country of Bahrain involved presence on social networking sites such as Facebook and You Tube, features such are open forums, blogs, live chats, online polls, e-

newsletters and other interactive services that involve citizens in government decision making are visible in the national portal and ministry websites of the country. Another notable feature was obtained from the country of Ghana where the government websites of the country make use of featuring tools through social media box for You Tube and has direct links to the Facebook accounts of the government officials in the Ministry of Information. The government websites of the United States of America also uses social media tools such as You Tube, Twitter, and Facebook to easily connect and communicate with citizens and other government agencies and the Gov Gab Blog where bloggers share tips and information from the Federal government, comment and share their own experiences.

4.3 Contents and Features in the Government Websites

Parajuli (2007) cited the outcome of the study of La Porte, et. al. (2000) which reveals that government agencies must create a meaningful websites that enables citizens to capture and filter relevant information for their individual purposes. For Kim, et al. (1999) as likewise cited by Parajuli (2007), the frequency of update, freshness and maintenance of the site reflects that the site contains the currency of information; this could show that the government is serious in disseminating timely information.

Regarding the contact information still cited by Parajuli (2007), Misic and Johnson (1999) expressed that, other than making available of email information as a dominant mechanism of communication in government site, other contact information of the organization and personnel must also be provided. To foster greater interaction during and beyond working hours, the diffusion use of ICT services such as telephone and fax were suggested by Philips (2001). Whereas, United Nation (2005) insisted that, to target a larger audience the use of web media such as feedback feature, discussion forum, chat room and interactive bulletin board are the useful aids. This idea was supported by Parajuli (2007) as another avenue to facilitate government-government interactivity and further to be beneficial in understanding citizens' voice.

According to the 2001 study conducted by the World Market Centre and Brown University where a total of 2,288 government websites in 196 nations were reviewed, the following common features were the commonalities on the surveyed government websites: phone contact information, addresses; publications; databases, links to the other sites; audio clips, video clips; not having advertisements, not having user fees; having privacy policies, security policies; having online services, having a portal connection ; allowing digital signature on transactions, options to pay via credit cards and search capabilities, areas to post comment, broadcast of events (Lafara et al. ,2002). The overall conclusion of the survey revealed that many of the surveyed countries did not make used of the advantages offered by the interactive features of the Internet which resulted to lack of dynamism and robustness and failing to capture the potential of ICT to enhance democracy.

Contents' accessibility is also a must in any of the government websites; this was argued by the authors namely Shneiderman and Zahedi (2000) and also Song (2001) as reflected in the study of Parajuli (2007) that government websites must be made accessible to all regardless of expertise, personality, literacy, ethnicity and disability. The authors demanded that multilingual option, frequently asked questions (FAQs), text-only option and disability features are the functional features which must be provided in any of the government websites.

Accessibility (Nielson (2000) and Newmann and Landay (2000) as likewise cited by Parajuli (2007)), requires the presence of the site map as where the government website is located by any of the government unit; the authors stressed that the existence of the site map reveals the logical and structural order of a website. Moreover, appearance of search facility in the site was also helpful to allow fast retrieval of information (Nielson, 2000).

Unintended information is vulnerable to be displayed in any of the government websites. In fact, availability of words which are spelled incorrectly as posted in the government websites as well as grammatical errors are visible in the websites of MENA countries. The occurrence of the situation could

raise doubts among English-speaking citizens as well as English speaking tourists about the government's commitment to offering e-Government services (Demissie, et al., 2010). Further, the authors believed that the government websites should strive to provide convenience to the users accessing the websites by providing uniform templates in all the web pages of the site to ease user's navigation experience. In addition to that, the authors also suggested that as much as possible avoid embedding multimedia components which will make the loading of the web page slow, this could give an unpleasant and unaccommodating experience to the users.

To include the establishment date of the web site and the date particulars of the contents posted in the pages of the government websites reveals the evolution of the web activities which can assist in reviewing the historical development of government's online presence (Parajuli, 2007).

At the 2012 United Nations e-Government Survey, they found out that 179 countries provide some form of documentation related to finance, the most common among them were tax forms. Moreover, laws, policies and other documentation of interest to the citizen on education, health, social welfare and other sectors were increasingly being integrated within the overall national portal and/or the agency portals. Therefore, the survey concluded that most countries around the world continues its progress in online service delivery to further enhance public sector efficiencies and streamline governance systems to support sustainable development with the Republic of Korea as the world leader of e-Governance implementation.

4.4 Evaluation of Government Websites in the Philippines

The study of Ilago (2001) 10discussed the role of information in the process of participation and showed the nature of the internet as a medium in enhancing participation. At the time Ilago (2001) conducted the study, internet usage in the Philippines was still quite new based on a cross-country comparison with selected Asian countries. The result depicted the only 0.01% of the total population who has access to the internet. The author further reviewed the websites of the local governments of the country and found out that only 7 out of the 35 surveyed websites contained information on local government policies, memoranda, regulations and local legislations.

Meanwhile another report was noted from Lallana, et al. (2002) regarding e-Government in the Philippines. The report revealed that there is no transactional government website in the country, about 14% of the agency websites were unreachable, only 19% of the Philippine government websites studied can be considered "Interactive". Further it was noted also that Philippine websites do not have a common look and feel. To sum up with, such results are not highly commendable.

Another study is from Siar (2007), where the purpose of such was to assess the local government websites of all the cities of the country. The outcome showed a clear absence of substantial information and resources that could enhance the quality and speed of service delivery, make government more transparent, facilitate public participation in decision making and ultimately bring government, citizens, business, community organizations and other groups in society together in the governance process. It is noteworthy that in the study the website of Panabo City is one of the several city websites where contents are mostly empty. It was considered technically to have a web presence but almost useless. While the study of Ilago (2001) utilized Klaus Lenk's 4 broad classification of services in order to determine the applications and services offered by the local government websites as his subjects, the work Lallana et al.(2002) assessed the 140 websites of government agencies of the country as to their progress in accordance to the 5 Stages of e-Government as per standard of the United Nations and the American Society of Public Administration (UN-ASPA). With due respect to the work of Siar (2007), the study come up with a comprehensive investigation of the content and information contained in each of the 102 city government websites while ascertaining their scope, usefulness, degree of transparency and effectiveness for the improvement of governance process.

4.5 Citizens' Participation

For Reddick (2004)11, it is the citizen interaction with e-Government or the use of the internet that lead the now so called e-citizens also termed as netizens in the improvement of their interaction with the government. In the study of La Porte et al (2000) as cited by Streib and Thomas (2003), they concluded that availability of governmental information on the web promotes governmental openness and transparency which later facilitates the achievement of democratic values. Letting citizens to participate in decision making is a transformative method which can be attributed to social change (Nelson and Wright, 1995 as cited by Irvin et. al, 2004) and citizen involvement is intended to produce better decisions which brought more efficient benefits to the rest of the society (Beirle 1999; Thomas 1995); while Echeverria (2001) argues that collaborative process is deliberately designed to slow down environmental decision making, favor the status quo. 12

4.6 Transparency in e-Governance

Transparency is making available of the internal system and processes to the external audiences (Phillips, 2001)13. For Lallana et al. (2002) it entails elimination of function duplications and improvement of adherence to proper government procedure. For the president of the USA, Obama (2009) believed that openness will strengthen democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in government.

From the above discussions, the relationship between transparency and good governance becomes directly proportional. This was observed in the case study of You and Lee (2014 entitled Budget Transparency and Participation in Korea where they acknowledged that the relationship between good governance and better economic and social outcomes is brought by transparency which they considered as a key element of good governance. Goldkuhl and Rostlinger (no date)15 revealed the outcome of their study stating that there is a positive relationship between a country's e-Government score and its transparency score. They added that the use of Internet technologies as a practice of e-Government is a means to increase transparency in government operations. This is supported by Hill (no date)16 that the use of ICT is vital in combating corruption; the author further cited that a benchmarking and constant evaluation is in need for efficient e-Government service.

4.7 FDP of the Philippines

In compliance with the promotion of transparency as pursuance of DILG memorandum Circular No. 2011-08 and DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2010-83, the Full Disclosure Policy in the Philippines came into existence as spearheaded by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). The implementation of FDP was started last 2010 by its then Secretary Jesse M. Robredo. This has been the dream of the late DILG Secretary to promote honest government in order to bring back the Filipino people's trust in their local government through practicing transparency and accountability.

FDP is the Philippines' government policy requiring local officials of provinces, cities and municipalities to fully disclose particular financial transactions of the LGU to keep their constituents informed on how LGU budget is managed, disbursed and used. This policy is not a new rule existed since this act fully abides the following legal laws mandates which requires its implementation: Section 352 of the Local Government Code, Republic Act No. 9184- known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, Section 90 of Republic Act No. 10147 (General Appropriation Act) FY 2011- "Use and Disbursement of Internal Revenue Allotment of LGUs" and the Commission on Audit Internal Memorandum , dated October 8,2010.

In the report of Ong (2012)17, as of June 2012, as obtained from the latest Pulse Asia and Social Weather Stations survey, 1,697 or 99% of LGUs had complied with the policy. The said compliance of most of the LGUs could be attributed to the fact that FDP became a requirement in the conferment of the Seal of Good Housekeeping (SGH) which rewarded those LGUs who promoted honesty and excellence in local

governance. As of June 2012, 856 LGUs have qualified for the SGH and granted a P1.1 billion from the Performance Challenge Fund.

5. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework formulated determines the condition of e-Governance implementation in all the cities of Davao Region. Six (6) government websites were assessed focusing on the contents of information and reports available. The study utilized the framework used by Siar (2007) in assessing the quantity of websites. Moreover, the formulation of the framework is inspired in the Four-Dimensional e-Government Framework by Nour, et al. (2008) as cited by Rahman (2010) 18 which emphasized about the need to have an accessible and transparent e-Governance system.

There are two (2) main variables available; the independent variable which comprises the two indicators namely, contents of information and posting of the FDP required reports and the dependent variable which are the concerned city websites in Davao Region (see Figure 1).

6. Methodology

6.1 Methods and Sources

The study was predominantly concerned in attaining the answers in the questions "what is the update?" and "do they comply?" thus this is an evaluative type of research. Simultaneously, the study employed qualitative research method to allow the views, opinions, comments and observations of the researcher and the respondents to be included in the assessment.

This research used both primary and secondary data. Primary data involved the quantified results drawn from the evaluation conducted through the checklist used by the researcher in evaluating the contents of the concerned websites and also from the garnered data through the questionnaire made as evaluated by the respondents to triangulate the initial data gathered by the researcher who also acted as an evaluator. Secondary data comprised the official documents posted at the City Government websites which were retrieved by the researcher. Moreover, during evaluation of the websites and the conducted focus group discussion, a personal comment was taken account of by the researcher and evaluators as per observations during the assessment in order to come up with qualitative information.

6.2 Instrument Used and Sampling Technique

This research utilized the checklist scheme *"Functional Categorization in the Assessment of Web Content"* by Siar (2007) in finding out the answer as to the web contents of the cities' websites. The said scheme was both utilized by the researchers during the initial evaluation and also by the participants during the conducted focus group discussion (FGD). In order to know the availability of the reports required by FDP, the researchers prepared a dummy table that was filled-out once certain reports were retrievable or not at the portal.

To triangulate the data obtained by the researcher during the initial evaluation using the checklist scheme, a focus group discussion (FGD) was further conducted. Clustered sampling was used in selecting 30 respondents belonging in the field of information technology (IT). Moreover, purposive sampling were utilized in picking ten (10) 3rd year IT students, ten (10) 1st year IT students and ten (10) IT instructors to participate in the three (3) sessions set for FGD.

6.3 Procedure of Data Collection

1. The researcher individually accessed each of the government city websites in Davao Region and evaluated through the use of the instrument adapted from the study of Siar (2007).
2. Initial assessment was made initially by the researchers where during that time; some screenshots were captured in each of the websites. Insightful comments and observations are carefully noted for the purpose of valuable deliberation in discussing the results and in giving recommendations.
3. Three (3) sessions were held and each session was participated by a total of 30 respondents to name, fifteen (10) 3rd year IT students, ten (10) are 1st year IT students and ten (10) IT instructors in separate session where every session last for about three (3) hours.
4. Equipped with the LCD projector, the researchers then utilized the first one (1) hour in discussing the purpose of the discussion, clarifying some unclear items inquired and familiarization on the section of the websites. The remaining two (2) hours were utilized for assessing the presence of every item in the websites of the concerned LGUs, for entertaining deliberative discussions and queries as well as for letting the respondent write their individual comments in the blank space provided in the instrument.
5. In order to assess the manner of pursuance of the city LGU to the FDP in the manner of posting the reports in the websites, the researcher used the table drawn in checking the availability of the reports inquired from 2010 to 2012.
6. Descriptive statistics tools such as Frequency, Mean and Percentage were used in processing the data.
7. Evaluation period runs between February 10 to March 10, 2013.

7. Findings and Discussion

7.1 Status of the Cities' Websites

The prevalent typical information contained in most of the websites in Davao Region was apparently about the connection between city government and business sectors (Function 6) where 58% were garnered by the cities' websites. It was followed by Function 1 for having 56% garnered average of the information which promotes awareness of the citizens in understanding the characteristics of their community.

However, only 43% of all the items queried in Function 3 serve as the average contents of the websites concerned. Though there were two city websites, Davao and Tagum which got all the items that promote transparency and accountability, other websites got a low outcome.

While Davao and Tagum websites were sufficient enough in posting contacts of the officials and offices as well as making available of either vertical or horizontal communications, some other websites poorly provided these contents. An average of 40% is the total outcome of the websites in Function 5. To continue, an average of 38% were garnered for Function 2 out of all the contents of the websites since almost all of the websites does not have downloadable forms in securing relevant permits and not of all websites displayed contents concerning to procedures in applying and/or availing pertinent documents.

Extremely low result can be found in Function 4 where 25% is the percentage of the websites in the contents queried in this specific function. Four of the city websites did not have any item inquired relating to the awareness of policy making and participation in decision making while Davao and Tagum got only 1 and 2 items respectively.

The functions wherein average contents were less than 50% are Function 2, 3, 4 and 5 where contents respectively inquired about delivery of frontline services, transparency and accountability, public awareness in policy making and their participation in decision making and linkage between city government, citizens and other groups.

7.2 Compliance to FDP

Among the 13 reports required, the most complied documents as posted in the concerned websites were the budget reports, specifically the annual posting of Budget and Statement of Receipts and Expenditures wherein 56% of the 18 items queried in both items were displayed on the sites. For the Statement of Debt Services report, 44% were obtainable, the same percentage for the Statement of Cash Flow report which is required on a quarterly basis.

For the procurement reports, the highest garnered percentage was 39% for the posting of the Annual Procurement Plan or List. While both Trust Fund and SEF Utilization reports were the most complied report in the special fund reports category having both a percentage of 39%.

It was individually presented that every year each city is required to post 34 reports, so for the 6 cities a total of 204 reports were inquired yearly. As observed in the table there was a gradual rate of compliance of the city websites, where in the year 2010, a total of 41 reports out of 204 can be obtained among the websites concerned, for the year 2011 it increased to 72 reports and for the year 2012 a total of 113 reports can be found.

The use of websites as a medium to promote transparency is observably utilized by the cities in Davao Region except for Digos. This practice affirms President Barack Obama of USA who believes that openness will strengthen democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in government. 19 However, to achieve increase transparency which decreases corruption is not possible without incorporating appropriate channels for public feedback (UNDP, 2005).

As far as the availability of the documents are concerned, a total of 612 reports were inquired from 2010-2012, however only 220 reports which could be found in all the concerned city LGU websites. Referring to the outcome presented individually wherein only the cities of Mati and Tagum has more than half of the inquired documents from the year 2010-2012, accompanied with the overall outcome reflecting that in totality a percentage of 36% is obtained as the computed extent of compliance of all the cities, it can be concluded that not all the cities complied with the FDP requirement on posting the inquired reports.

7.3 Comparison of the Websites' Contents

The city of Davao and Tagum unexpectedly got an equal rate of 3.86 which corresponds to good remarks, this simply imply that the two city websites possessed 70% to 84% of the respondents' assessments. It was followed by the city websites of Samal and Mati for having the means of 1.91 and 1.58 respectively. The average rates emphasize that only 40% to 54% is the outcome of the city websites in the assessments done by the respondents; this corresponds to a poor remarks. Average rates of 1.34 and 1.18 were given consecutively to the cities of Panabo and Digos. This signifies that the city websites possessed less than 40% of the expected outcome of the respondents; this corresponds to unsatisfactory remarks.

None of the government city websites in Davao Region got an excellent remark though cities of Davao and Tagum has a lot of features but these are not queried in the checklist thus were not rated by the respondents. For Affisco and Soliman (2006) and Al-adawi, Yousafzai and Pallister (2005) for the cities of Davao Region be considered as a higher level of e-government service, the websites must possessed higher number of features and dynamic features such as online executable service. 20

In the respective function schemes, Function 1 and 6 both obtained a means of 2.60 and 2.70 respectively which equates to average remarks. The result tells that averagely, the information which promotes citizens awareness and understandings of the cities' characteristics and linkage between government and business were made available by all the city websites of Davao Region 55% to 69% as accorded by the expected outcome of the respondents.

For the information which promotes efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery (Function 2), transparency and accountability in operations and services (Function 3) and linkage and interaction between government, citizens and other groups (Function 5); respective rates of 2.31, 2.49 and 2.15 were the computed means. This denotes that only 40% to 50% of the expected information was being displayed in all the concerned websites; it is equivalent to a rating of poor.

Lastly, the government websites in Davao Region earned an unsatisfactory rating in posting information queried in Function 4. The rating obtained tells that averagely, the city websites in Davao Region contained less than 40% of the contents which promotes awareness of policy making process and participation in decision making. Boris and Krehely (2002) and Brody, Godschalk and Burby (2003) as cited by Chadwick (2003) noted that provision of the above contents heightened citizen' participation which is vital in ensuring that the governmental decisions and policies reflect the public interest; it decreases the doubts of the citizens and their distrust to the government.

It is noteworthy also to ponder and discuss that none of the city websites in Davao Region offer the web services through .com which are often used as a commercial site. This could be linked up to what Cresswell et al. (2007) said that, once offered as commercial site, it may indicate lack of commitment by the government in offering web services to the public. Hence, the city websites of Davao Region were made accessible having a .gov domain which clearly emphasizes that the city websites were launched as e-government sites.

Regarding the currency of information, it can be noted during the evaluation period that the city websites of Digos, IGaCoS, Mati and Panabo were not regularly updated. Appearance of this scenario hinders the citizens to be informed of the current updates of the citie's activities. These cities must take note of what Kim, et al. (1999) as cited by Parajuli (2007) said that it is necessary to have updated information in the government websites as it shows the seriousness of the government to disseminate timely information in order to gain the trust of the users in general.

Moreover, in the stages of development of e-government services as indentified by Affisco and Soliman (2006) and Al-dawi et al. (2005), Davao can be regarded as already in Stage 4 – the transforming stage since the website of Davao can be considered already a single-point portal which integrates all the e-government services offered by all the departments of the city. However considering Stage 3 which is the transacting level, it is observable that the city website does not offer completion of an entire service online, yet the city website can be identified to reach already on the last level.

The city website of Digos is still on Stage 1- the publishing level since its website presented only the information regarding the city in a static way. Since the website of Tagum is capable of providing downloadable forms and has a search function, it can be indentified on the interacting level, the Stage 2. The city websites of IGaCoS, Mati and Panabo can be considered also to be in the level of Stage 2 even though there were no search functions provided just making available of the downloadable form.

7.4 Manner of Posting FDP Reports

In terms of accessibility of the reports, in the 5 cities of Davao Region complying to FDP, only the city of Davao does not provide a specific page and link where relevant documents can be accessed conveniently, all other websites make available of a link which redirects to the page where reports are displayed. To add with, only the city website of IGaCoS and Mati provide information of the reports uploaded along with the details of the published date, but not all the reports uploaded in the website of IGaCoS were accompanied with date published only the recent reports. In the city website of Mati, the manner of displaying the reports is confusing to the viewer since the query is not about the reports intended for the particular year or quarter but instead as to the date it was uploaded in the website.

The city website of Davao, Panabo and Tagum posted the reports according to what year or quarter the report is with no accompanied date but only the website of Tagum conveniently posted it in just one page since for the city of Davao not all the reports were posted on the same page though a search mechanism is provided and for the city website of Panabo it was plainly listed on the page no filtering feature provided.

In viewing the report, you have to download it first to see the content of the specific reports in the case of the websites of Davao, Panabo and Mati while for the city website of IGaCoS the report is also available for download and you can also view the content online and a feature where you can print directly the certain report is provided; as to the city of Tagum it can be viewed online and once you redirected to docs.google.com you can have it printed directly.

It can be observed also that the posted reports of the city website of Panabo were uploaded in www.sribd.com wherein not everyone can download it unless you undergo the sign-up process of the site. In Tagum, as observed, all the reports regarding FDP were uploaded in docs.google.com where you can opt to print the .pdf file though you can directly view it as it was displayed as it was displayed on the frame provided once you click certain report.

As to the format of the file which can be downloaded, all the city websites which made available of downloadable reports were having a .pdf extension. The uniformity of the file format could ease the user's navigation experience (Demissie, et al., 2010).

About the accuracy and quality of the reports posted, it was observed that only the city websites of Davao and Tagum embed the city logo in all the reposts which can be viewed and downloaded from the site and followed the proper templates provided in posting the reports. Some reports uploaded by the city website of Panabo were not that clear since it was scanned only and some posting of documents does not follow the required frequency of posting if it is by quarter or just annual, the same case is observable to the city website of Mati wherein there were reports which the content does not match to its title, words which were misspelled and since it is archived directly, redundant reports were often encountered. The availability of the words which were spelled incorrectly, grammatically errors and some reports which were mistakenly uploaded could hinder the process of citizen participation Demissie et al. (2010). The authors added that the occurrences of the mentioned erroneous actions could raise doubt among English-speaking citizens and tourist regarding the commitment of the government to offer reliable e-government services.

The city website of IGaCoS also did posting of the reports not following the guidelines of the frequency of posting, some documents were summarized reports and not done quarterly, other reports were done quarterly which should be annual. Bulky documents can be found on all the websites since most of the sites posted individual reports with regards to the bidding and some other documents as posted but the city website of Tagum organized the manner of displaying it.

Out from the discussion presented it can be concluded that all the cities in Davao Region except for Digos practice the culture of transparency via ICTs capabilities as the medium. Through this, it enhances the degree of accountability of the cities and shows the ability of the officials spearheading the city to interact with citizens through e-governance. This proves the idea of Wong and Welch (2009)21 that websites serve as medium in comparing various aspects and features which promotes transparency as brought by e-governance.

7.5 Other Contents and Features

The below discussions are the contents and features found in the city websites in Davao Region during the conduct of FDG. The following lists are not queried in the checklist of Siar (2007):

- **Archival of FDP Reports**. The required documents by FDP were archived by all the city websites in Davao Region except for Digos. This gives the possibility to browse relevant documents

pertaining to the transparent actions promoted by the city LGU not just for the current but also in the previous years; thus this can also become a reference for any scholarly work such as research and case study.

- **Archival of News**. This feature is available in the city websites of Davao and Tagum as all the news posted were archived in a page wherein citizen can query the specific new which once posted in the website.

- **Blogs**. Blog is an avenue where people can freely write information and expressed opinions to be presented using any multimedia components. Once published, this will be made available to all the individuals who will be connected in the Internet. The city websites of Davao and Tagum provided a specific page wherein links of the blogs which contains updates and impressions of the city, promotion of the tourism industry were clustered together and made available to the reader. The output of the bloggers is an aid to promote the city government not just locally but worldwide.

- **Calendar of Events**. The city website of Davao and Tagum included a feature wherein all the scheduled activities were hereby posted wherein once clicked, it displays the details of the event selected. This feature conveniently let the citizens to browse the list of events as if you are just scrolling on a calendar (literally) having a memo in every concerned event.

- **Current Prices of Products**. The website of Tagum posted information regarding the current prices of the products available in the city market. Once visited the site, the manner of displaying the information is through providing an eye-catching link which when clicked redirects the user to the page where relevant information is provided. Having this information accessibly made available to the citizen can be considered as a transparent action concerning the benefits of the citizens. This lets the citizens be informed and encouraged to visit the site frequently.

- **Departmental Page**. The city website of Davao allocated specific web pages in every department wherein services offered and downloadable forms were accessibly provided. The availability of the vital details as posted in every department of the city would bring rich information to the citizens in availing the services of the city.

- **Entry Form in Joining Events**. A form regarding the events which can be downloaded by the interested citizens who want to participate was provided in the city website of Davao. The accessibility brought by the provision of this service adds convenience and encourage participation of the citizens.

- **Featured and Coming Events**. The city website of Davao provided a page where contents about the latest and coming events were visibly displayed in the homepage enabling the citizens to be at always updated and be informed of the events in the city.

- **Online Publication**. The city websites of Davao and Tagum made available of the online magazines in their websites which can be downloaded free of charge. According to West (2007), online information is a typical content of e-government website but in the Davao Region, only the cities of Davao and Tagum provided such.

- **Published Details of Website**. The city website of Tagum provided information regarding the history of its city websites along with the date and the incurred development. For Parajuli (2007), making available the establishment date and/or profile of the website reveals the evolution of web activities, hence this becomes an aid in reviewing the historical development of government's online presence.

- **Site Map**. The sole city which provided a site map on its official website is Tagum; this provides a bird's eye view of the entire site. According to Nielson (2000) and Newman and Landay (2000), site map as a directory of the content areas is vital to be included since it reveals the logical and structural order of a website thus adds convenience as the citizens make it easier to browse the contents of the site.

- **Site Requisites**. The city websites of Davao and Tagum provided information regarding the compatibility concerns of its websites. The two website specifically define the browser (Chrome for Davao and Mozilla Firefox for Tagum) and the screen resolutions where the sites execute smoothly. Other than that, the two websites also included the additional plug-ins required by the websites

which includes the Adobe Flash Player and Adobe Reader. Availability of the above details inhibit desire of the city governments to provide a convenient environment as the citizens browse for any information available in the websites in order to gain citizens' satisfaction.

- **Search Links and Bar.** The provision of the quick links which redirect users to locate specific page and textboxes which conveniently search for the specific query could add convenience to the users as it promotes a friendly-user environment. As for Nielson (2000), search facilities can efficiently respond to the query, with that it allow fast information retrieval and reduce the navigation time of the users. Thomas and Streib (2003)22 expressed that users will highly recommend government sites which provided good aspect such as ease of use and usefulness. Hence, provision of these lets the user to visit more often the site and boost citizens' interaction.

- **Social Networking.** The city websites of IGaCoS, Samal and Tagum utilize the advantage brought by the social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter as proven in the embedded plug-ins posted in the websites. Facebook pages and Twitter accounts of the cities were used to interact with the citizens as the citizens can freely post comments and join in the discussions provided. The three city websites provided an avenue were citizens can interact with the government and other citizens freely and with ease as it is available 24/7. The trending use of social networking sites as a channel of interaction between government and citizens is noticeable also in some other countries of Middle East and South Africa; this heightened the stakeholders to participate thus becomes a tool for opinions sharing purposes (Demissie, et al., 2010).

- **Translator.** The contents of the city website of Tagum can be conveniently translated into 10 different common languages used in the world. It adds convenience to the readers especially the foreigners as the websites caters it services not just locally but internationally. As a result, this could facilitate promotion of the city's tourism industry.

- **Visitor Counter.** The city LGU of Davao and Tagum provided a counter which increments once the city website is visited. The number of visitors counted could make the citizens perceive how useful and popular the site is which somewhat creates a positive perception.

- **Widgets.** These features were provided in the city websites of Davao, IGaCoS, Mati and Tagum wherein the manner of displaying the current climate and temperature of the cities were powered by the external links which were embedded in the sites. The illustrative and entertaining displays offered by these widgets are informative enough which adds positive impression to the viewers.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Qualitative Discussions

8.1.1 Website Contents

In the checklist used from the study of Siar (2007) where there were six (6) functions with corresponding number of items specifically querying for the contents of information a website promotes, minimal outcomes are accessible to all the cities in Davao Region except for Davao and Tagum. There are some available contents and advanced features in the websites of Davao Region which are not included in the checklist used. The contents of the city website of Digos were found to be mostly empty in view of the slight availability of information, dead links and inaccurate display of information; though a website is accessible technically, it is almost useless. Therefore, it can be concluded that not all the essential information queried in each of the function scheme were made available by the cities' websites in Davao Region. Even by that, generally, the city websites are into the promotion of information which incites civic engagement and striving to make the government more accountable and transparent.

In specific terms, majority of the contents of information available in the city websites are those related to the linkage between the LGUs and the business sectors. However, lack of information relating to the citizens awareness of policy making process and participation in decision making can be observed in all the

city websites of the LGUs concerned. To add with, it is notable that there is a deficiency in displaying vital information and resources which enhances the quality and speed of service delivery.

With all due fairness in the concerned sites, improvements regarding the availability of contents are noticeable especially in the city website of Panabo where Siar (2007) describe it as an almost useless website when it was accessed last 2004.

8.1.2 Compliance to FDP

Since the FDP was implemented last 2010, all the city websites are compliant in posting the required reports as depicted in the increasing number of reports accessed in 3 years' time. But this is exceptionally false in the city website of Digos since there is no reports can be found in the site. It can be noted also that the city website of Mati as the one garnered the highest percentage in making available of the documents inquired. With that, it is fair to conclude that all the city websites in Davao Region were compliant to FDP in posting the required reports except for the city government website of Digos.

8.2 Quantitative Discussions

8.2.1 Comparison of the Contents of the City

Every department of the city of Davao has its own specific page detailing the departments' own resources and services in its website where rich information was provided in each of the department. With these, some contents are not instantly visible and easily to be accessed once you need to have it located on some other page, a sort of possibility is open in the case the researcher overlooked some information which are available in the city. Meanwhile, Tagum website provided a convenient way in displaying the contents on its homepage. Contents of information were categorized orderly according to menu and varied sectors; some other links and pages were also clustered orderly. In the websites of IGaCoS, Mati and Panabo, information cited are not that rich and limited only to standard information and most of the contents are displayed through text in static mode.

8.2.2 Manner of Posting the FDP Reports

Not all the contents uploaded in the city website of Davao can be visibly located. The queried reports relevant to FDP were not displayed in the same page with that there is a tendency that the researcher overlooked some reports which are available in the site. Further, no specific searching or filtering feature was provided to conveniently search specific report.

Relatively low reports can be obtained in the city websites of IGaCoS since reports inquired start in the year 2010 – 2012. This is due to the fact that most of the relevant reports posted in the website of IGaCoS are recent reports for the year 2013. Panabo website displayed the reports not in organize way as it's plainly displayed all the reports in a list format and lengthy page. Some documents uploaded in the city website of Panabo were distorted and blurred; one of these is the Gender and Development report for the year 2012. There were also reports which were repeatedly uploaded in the city website of Mati and the Annual Procurement Plan provided is a different report which is a Notice to Conduct Direct Contracting.

Not all the reports uploaded by the city websites followed the guided template provided in posting the concerned reports. The researcher encountered difficulty in determining the availability of all the inquired reports available in the city websites since some reports uploaded are not by quarter or annual oftentimes it was updated monthly and bidding reports are posted every bidding occurs in any item. With that, reports which are not completely available as to the inquired frequency of posting or the covered month per quarter are not counted. The same action was done to the reports which are uploaded incorrectly and the reports which are not clear but reports are counted even though the format is not the same as the guided one.

8.3 Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of this study:

a. Generally, concerned government websites must display informative contents which are rich and updated not just some standard information and outdated one. Recent news must be posted on the homepage and obsolete news must be kept on archive where citizen can query according to the date happened.

b. Concerned LGUs must strive to make available of the recent ordinances approved and the resolutions in their websites. In this way, citizens will be aware of the recent developmental actions initiated by the government for the city and this could answer the questions which boggles the mind of the citizen thus this could avoid any misinterpretation and enhance the level of citizen's participation.

c. The use of social networking site which is Facebook would be an ideal feature to be embedded in the sites in getting online surveys and polls. In the extreme number of users the social networking sites has, where online people are rampant, it could be the best way to have an official Facebook page to be acquired by the city LGU where citizens can follow and be updated on any recent update posted in the government Facebook page. This will keep the citizen be updated and at the same time promotes the page to some other friends in the social site.

d. Regarding the discussions and chat capability of the websites, LGU must set a specific page in the website where registered citizens through email addresses can open a discussion or can chat and discuss with other registered users. On the other hand, features of the social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter can be utilized where authorized personnel can post topic subject for discussion just like what the city websites of Davao and Tagum did. Plug-ins for Facebook and Twitter must then be installed in the sites in order for the post, comments and updates will be synchronized in the websites. Having those mentioned communication tools could lower the cost of participation while enhancing citizen involvement.

e. Downloadable forms intended for applying any transactions catered by the LGU must be made available in the site and ready to be downloaded; it could add convenience also to provide a file uploading capability to directly send the accomplished form. Making available some forms and information which are mostly requested by the citizens would become a reason for the citizen to frequently visit the site.

f. Specific sites of IGaCoS, Mati and Panabo must include vital information on the departments and offices and other business sectors available in the LGU with complete contact information which could include email addresses, telephone/fax numbers and mobile numbers. Further, to promote tourism and access any business establishment, contact of information must also be included.

g. To establish user-friendliness, site requirements and requisites are best to be displayed in the site accessibly in the homepage and links to obtain additional software must be provided also. Further a page intended for the frequently asked questions (FAQs) must be provided to cluster all the most asked questions thus most probably answer the possible questions queried by the citizens. The above actions add convenience to the citizens while exploring the page.

h. The Local government unit of Digos must develop its government site by providing the necessary contents needed to be displayed in the website, enhance the design and appearance of its web pages, and should make available of some features which requires user's interaction. Further, the city government should practice transparency by posting the governmental budgets and spending in its official website.

i. In displaying reports required by the FDP, even though city LGUs are required to submit the reports at the FDP portal, it is best to provide a specific page in the site where all relevant reports required are posted. With regards to the format, the template guide provided by the FDP in the FDP portal should be followed. To add convenience to the inquiring citizen in accessing the reports, reports should be named appropriately and must be clustered according to category; this should be sorted in chronological order specifying the date published. However, it is recommended

to provide a search function specifically intended for querying any related report which must be made available on the same page where the reports are posted. It is best to display the transparency seal in the government site.

j.   The focus of this study is the assessment of the contents available in the websites which leads to the comparative discussions in each of the contents available. Though the study was able to identify the lacking contents in each of the city websites concerned, it overlooked the design development, accessibility, usability and security and implementation of the websites. Hence, it is recommended by the researcher that future research be conducted, this time with on the said indicators.

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